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Big Shuffle in Moscow

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Will More Secret Agents Flee?

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Premier Khrushchev is reported to be having spy trouble in addition to Russia's usual economic and agricultural difficulties.

There is increasing evidence that the recent defection to the West of Russia's secret agent Yuri Nosenko was merely the latest incident in a series of failures that have disrupted Moscow's global espionage network.



Nosenko doubled as an agent of the secret police and adviser to the Russian delegation at the Geneva Disarmament Conference. He is also believed to be an expert on Soviet atomic weapons.

Western intelligence officials regard as significant the fact that Nosenko's defection came at a time when the Soviet government decided to clean house in its espionage setup.

It is now known that shortly before Nosenko requested asylum in the United States, Gen. P. I. Ivashutin was appointed chief of Soviet intelligence. He replaced the notorious Gen. Ivan Serov, who vanished into obscurity after the execution last year of Col. Oleg Penkovsky.

Penkovsky, a brilliant scientist and military expert, was a member of the highest circles in Red society. He was the son-in-law of a top Soviet general and the nephew of another general. Nevertheless, he supplied the West with valuable information for two years before he was finally tracked down by the Russian secret police.

Soviet intelligence had been previously hurt by the unmasking of one of its most valuable agents in the West, Swedish Col. Stig Wennerstrom.

Wennerstrom, now on trial in Stockholm,

had been supplying NATO military secrets to Moscow for more than 15 years. From 1952 to 1957, he was Sweden's top attache in the United States. At the time of his arrest as a Russian spy, Wennerstrom was a high official of Sweden's Defense Department.

Before Wennerstrom's arrest, another top Soviet agent known as Anatoli Dolnytsin defected to the West, going by the way of Finland to London.

Dolnytsin is reported to have given the West such detailed information on Soviet espionage organizations that they are still paralyzed in many parts of the world as a result of his disclosures.

Premier Khrushchev's appointment of Gen. Ivashutin as chief of intelligence is thus seen as more evidence that the reorganization of Russia's badly crippled espionage network is far from completed. The serious internal personnel problems of the secret police are apparently still unresolved.

Ivashutin is not an intelligence expert but a security officer who received his training in the notorious SMERSH organization, the Red Army's counter espionage agency. SMERSH, known to all Ian Fleming readers, are the Russian initials for Death to Spies.

This, in the view of Western intelligence officials, clearly indicates that Ivashutin's job is primarily to spy on Russia's spies rather than gather intelligence. They report that the general has already begun to put under scrutiny intelligence operations conducted abroad through the United Nations, Soviet embassies and other diplomatic missions.

Yuri Nosenko defected because he feared to return to Russia after Ivashutin's appointment. He is believed to be only the first of the agents ready to seek asylum in the West before being caught in the large-scale purge of the Russian espionage network.